

Contributors



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FILE PHOTO

CATCHING UP WITH CRYSTAL DUKE

The cover story of last year's Health and Medical section was written by Crystal Duke, then a junior at Meridian High School. It was about losing weight and changing her lifestyle. While still committed to keeping off the excess pounds, Crystal Duke is more focused on school these days. A senior this year, Crystal is also enrolled at Meridian Community College, where she is taking 20 hours of classes. After graduation, she plans to continue her studies in accounting at either MCC or the University of Southern Mississippi. Crystal continues to watch what she eats and exercise and she's maintaining her weight. "I haven't lost a lot of pounds, but I'm down another pants size," she said.

Getting it in perspective

Jasmine Harris is a junior at Meridian High School. Her favorite sport is soccer; she's been playing since she was 4. Jasmine hopes to continue playing soccer at Meridian Community College and, ultimately, at the University of Southern Mississippi. She wants to be a pharmaceutical salesman.

By Jasmine Harris
special to The Star

I was born in Meridian. I have lived here all my life. My mom is from Munich, Germany, so I have been exposed a little to a different culture — but mostly, I have always known I was lucky to be able to live in America. I just did not realize how much until these past three years.

The differences between my friends and me and Iraqi children are tremendous. Until the United States military came and freed them, they lived under the constant rule of Saddam Hussein. They had no say in government or religion. They lived in constant fear of bombs falling out of the sky on their homes to saying something wrong, like their opinion, and never being seen again.

Their lives consist of the same schedule and routine every day. Iraqi kids work and make a little money for the family at 16. At 16, I go out with my friends in my car and ride around until all hours of the morning.

I also get a good education and plan on going to college and becoming a pharmaceutical salesman. In Iraq, kids could never think about furthering their education. They are worried about their family's needs and having a family of their own.

As an American, I just want to say my biggest "thank you" to the United States military for their actions in Iraq. Our military keeps us safe and out of harm's way. They are so brave and courageous helping to free the Iraqi people and defend our country.

I know now just how blessed I am to live here in America ... I am sure the Iraqis are grateful for what our United States military has done for them. They will now be proud to say, "I live in Iraq and I am free. Thank you, America!"



Harris

My yellow ribbon

Danielle Jones is a sophomore at Southeast Lauderdale High School. Her parents are Keith and Diane Jones and she has an older brother, Dylan. Danielle enjoys talking on the phone, shopping and being with friends. Danielle plans to become a physical therapist, but "anything in the medical field will be OK."

By Danielle Jones
special to The Star

When the yellow ribbon magnets first started showing up around town, I didn't pay that much attention. It just didn't seem that important to me at the time.

A few weeks after I saw the first ribbon on a car, I decided I wanted one, too.

My mom bought one, but I didn't put it on our car. I thought I should have a reason first. So, I sat down and started to think.

I knew a lot of people fighting overseas, so I figured I would just say the ribbon was in honor of those people. For some reason, that still didn't satisfy me. All I could think about was all the other people fighting overseas ... the ones I didn't know.

I finally came to the decision that my ribbon would be in honor of all the soldiers fighting in the war. I believe that every person over there is important. They are all trying to make our lives better by risking theirs. I am grateful for everything they have done.

Not too long ago, I proudly placed the yellow ribbon on our car in honor of everyone overseas.